



NURSES' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES ON PEDIATRIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Pediatric pain management continues to pose significant challenges in healthcare, directly influencing patient outcomes and overall quality of life. This cross-sectional study, conducted at Sir Ganga Ram Teaching Hospital in Lahore, aimed to evaluate the knowledge and attitudes of 52 nurses regarding the management of pain in pediatric patients. The results revealed that 69.4% of nurses displayed a solid understanding of pain management principles, although significant differences were found between those working in pediatric wards and outpatient departments. In terms of attitudes, 68.2% of nurses prioritized effective pain relief, particularly those with over five years of clinical experience. Despite these positive findings, substantial knowledge gaps were identified, underscoring the need for continued education and training. These results highlight the potential for improving pediatric pain management practices through targeted interventions and ongoing professional development. Future research should explore qualitative methods to provide deeper insights into nurses' attitudes toward pediatric pain management, thereby informing more comprehensive strategies for enhancing pain relief practices in healthcare settings.

INTRODUCTION

Acute pain management in healthcare remains a significant challenge, impacting patient outcomes and overall quality of life. With an aging population and increased longevity, the importance of effective pain control has become more prominent (Zainab & Muhammad Abu, 2018). Pain management is universally recognized as a fundamental human right, with organizations worldwide emphasizing the need for regular pain assessments, often considered the "fifth vital sign" critical for patient well-being (Morone & Weiner, 2013).

Despite its importance, pain management is often inadequate due to a lack of knowledge among healthcare workers, particularly nurses. The role of nurses is pivotal in pediatric pain management, encompassing early pain assessment, monitoring, and ensuring effective interventions. However, there remain significant gaps in their knowledge and attitudes, which hinder optimal pain relief for children (Nuseir et al., 2016). Global standards and protocols for pediatric pain management exist, but under-treatment persists, often due to insufficient



knowledge among providers (Katende & Mugabi, 2015).

Although nurses are not authorized to prescribe medications, they are essential in identifying and addressing pain, yet numerous studies have highlighted deficiencies in pain knowledge and unfavorable attitudes among pediatric nurses. Given the physiological differences between children and adults, pediatric pain management requires precise dosing and careful monitoring (Raffaeli et al., 2016). Research from several countries, including Turkey and India, has shown that pediatric nurses often have inadequate knowledge about pain management. For example, pediatric nurses in Turkey scored an average of 38.2% on pain management knowledge, and those in India scored 48.67%, indicating a critical need for standardized pediatric pain management protocols globally (Latina et al., 2015).

This issue has yet to be adequately addressed in Jordan, where studies exploring nurses' knowledge and attitudes toward pain management have not focused specifically on pediatric nurses. Therefore, this study aims to assess the knowledge and attitudes of pediatric nurses in Jordan, specifically at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Lahore, where no comprehensive research on this subject has been conducted (Ekim & Ocakcı, 2013).

Literature Review

Effective pain control is a cornerstone of nursing practice. However, insufficient pain management often occurs due to a lack of proper knowledge and education. A study in Jordan, using the Pediatric Nurses Knowledge and Attitude Survey (PNKAS), found that 78.3% of nurses had not attended any pain management-related continuing education, and the average knowledge score was 45.3% (Nimbalkar et al., 2014). A qualitative study by Anderson & Holford (2013) revealed gaps in knowledge about pain scales, analgesics, and opioid

administration, though nurses had positive attitudes toward pain management. Similarly, a study in Ethiopia found that training and work experience significantly improved nurses' knowledge and attitudes towards pediatric pain management (Lulie et al., 2022).

These findings underscore the importance of ongoing education, improved pain assessment tools, and institutional support to bridge the knowledge gap among nurses.

Methodology

****Study Design**:** A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted at Sir Ganga Ram Teaching Hospital, Lahore.

****Study Population**:** Pediatric staff nurses from the pediatric medical emergency and medical wards.

****Sample Size**:** Based on Slovin's formula, a sample size of 52 nurses was calculated from a total population of 60.

****Sampling Method**:** Non-probability convenience sampling, where nurses accessible to the researcher were selected.

****Data Collection**:** Data were collected using a structured, pretested self-administered questionnaire adopted from the Pediatric Nurses' Knowledge and Attitude Survey. Ethical approval was obtained from the hospital's ethical committee, and informed consent was secured from all participants.

****Data Analysis**:** Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data, while binary logistic regression models identified predictors of knowledge and attitude levels.

Results

****Demographics**:**

- 28.8% were aged 22-30 years, 59.6% were 31-40 years, and 11.5% were over 40 years.
- 67.3% were married, and 69.2% had a diploma.
- Experience ranged from less than 5 years (28.8%) to more than 10 years (21.2%).



****Knowledge and Attitudes**:**

- 98.1% of nurses correctly identified paracetamol as an appropriate treatment for children's pain, while 90.4% understood that long-term opioid use could cause dependence.

- 94.2% agreed that pain management should be prioritized in pediatric care, and 86.5% recognized the importance of pain-assessment tools.

Despite generally favorable attitudes, 26.9% of nurses incorrectly believed that children do not need analgesics before burn dressing changes. Furthermore, only 34.6% preferred a regular opioid schedule over a PRN (as-needed) schedule for continuous pain management.

Discussion

The study found that 69.4% of nurses demonstrated good knowledge of pediatric pain management, slightly lower than studies from Australia but higher than those in Ethiopia and Mekelle. Significant knowledge gaps were evident among nurses working in outpatient departments, reflecting less exposure to pediatric pain cases. In terms of attitudes, 68.2% of nurses showed a favorable approach to pain management, which was consistent with findings from Ethiopia and Bangladesh. However, longer work experience correlated with more positive attitudes, indicating the value of experience and ongoing education.

Conclusion

This study highlights that while a majority of pediatric nurses at Sir Ganga Ram Teaching Hospital exhibit favorable attitudes and reasonable knowledge regarding pain management, gaps still exist, particularly among less experienced staff. Enhancing continuous education, providing targeted in-service training, and improving pain-assessment tools are essential for optimizing pediatric pain management. Further qualitative studies are recommended to explore the deeper

attitudes and practices among nurses in this context.

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